

## !! Continuations from Page 1 !! Govt committed to...

Lt Governor said Jammu Kashmir is the confluence of art, literature, wisdom and culture. "This land is blessed with extremely talented people who have united the society and made tremendous contribution in national integration through their art", the Lt Governor observed.

He lauded the joint endeavour of All J&K Folk Artists' Association, J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages, Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi and North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala to showcase the rich musical heritage and folk art legacy of Jammu Kashmir Union Territory.

We are proud of our artists like Padma Shri recipient Folk Artist Romalo Ram who are promoting the folk art and cultural heritage of Jammu Kashmir; he said.

He also congratulated the artists for their enthralling performances on the occasion. A total of 450 artists from different parts of Jammu Kashmir are participating in the Cultural Festival. Suresh Kumar Gupta, Principal Secretary, Culture Department; Bharat Singh Manhas, Secretary JKAACL; Gulzar Bhat, Chairman All J&K Folk Artists' Association, senior officials, renowned artists and youth in large number were present.

## Educational reforms upgraded...

Radhakrishnan and mentor the younger generation to discharge their duty towards the society and the nation.

Shri Hare Ram Dass ji Maharaj, while speaking on the occasion, reiterated the commitment of Sant Hare Ram Dass Public School and Shri Shiv Mandir Nyas Trust to provide values-based education to the students for their holistic development. The Lt Governor felicitated the students who excelled in academics and diverse fields, and also planted a tree sapling in the school premises to mark the occasion. Former Legislators; ex-PRI members; religious heads, members of school management and Shri Shiv Mandir Nyas Trust, teachers, students and parents were present.



LG Manoj Sinha attending Annual-day function of Sant Hare Ram Dass Public School at Mandal.

## ACB registers DA...

income. During the course of Investigation, searches were conducted in the residential houses of both the officials and business establishments of HC Rajinder Kumar Sharma. During searches some incriminating documents and valuables have been seized and taken for investigation purpose. Further investigation of both the cases is going on.

## SC scraps electoral...

That is, it enhances access to legislators. This access also translates into influence over policy-making," said the bench also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna, B R Gavai, J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra.

"An economically affluent person has a higher ability to make financial contributions to political parties, and there is a legitimate possibility that financial contribution to a political party would lead to quid pro quo arrangements because of the close nexus between money and politics," the top court said delivering its two separate but unanimous verdicts cumulatively spanning 232 pages.

"Transparency and not secrecy is the cure and antidote," said Justice Sanjiv Khanna in his separate and concurring verdict.

The top court also accorded primacy to the right to know of voters over the privacy claims of donors, saying it is "paramount" for free and fair election and democracy.

The judgement referred to the annual audit reports of political parties from 2017-18 to 2022-23 which showed party-wise donations received through electoral bonds. Of the Rs 12,000 crore, the BJP received Rs 6,566.11 crore during this period, while the Congress got Rs 1,123.3 crore, according to the reports. The TMC received in its kitty Rs 1,092.98 crore in the same period.

The judgment was pronounced on a batch of petitions including those filed by Congress leader Jaya Thakur, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) challenging the bond scheme.

Democracy does not begin and end with elections and the integrity of election process is pivotal for sustaining the democratic form of government, it said.

Holding that the electoral bonds scheme was not fool-proof, the court said information about funds received by a political party is essential for voters to exercise their freedom to vote effectively.

The CJI, who authored a 152-page judgement for himself and on behalf of Justices Gavai, Pardiwala and Misra, said, "The electoral bond scheme, the proviso to section 29C(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1951 (as amended by section 137 of Finance Act 2017), section 182(3) of the Companies Act (as amended by section 154 of the Finance Act 2017), and section 13A(b) (as amended by section 11 of Finance Act 2017) are violative of Article 19(1)(a) and unconstitutional."

The scheme, notified on January 2, 2018, was pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of efforts to bring transparency in political funding and tackling black money.

"The electoral bond scheme is not the only means for curbing black money in electoral finance. There are other alternatives which substantially fulfil the purpose and impact the right to information minimally when compared to the impact of electoral bonds on the right to information," the CJI said.

The bench said integrity of the election process is pivotal for sustaining the democratic form of government and the Constitution also places the conduct of free and fair elections on a high pedestal.

It said financial contributions to political parties are usually made for two reasons -- they may constitute an expression of support to the political party or the contribution may be based on a "quid pro quo".

"The huge political contributions made by corporations and companies should not be allowed to conceal the reason for financial contributions made by another section of the population: a student, a daily wage worker, an artist, or a teacher. When the law permits political contributions and such contributions could be made as an expression of political support which would indicate the political affiliation of a person, it is the duty of the Constitution to protect them," it added.

It said not all political contributions are made with the intent of attempting to alter public policy and contributions are also made to political parties which are not substantially represented in legislatures.

The bench also noted it is true that contributions made as quid pro quo transactions are not an expression of political support.

## Union Minister e-inaugurates...

The identification and registration of senior citizen beneficiaries was done in the month of July 2019 by ALIMCO in association with district administration, Jammu.

The camp was organized by Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), from Mohali (Punjab) unit, working under the aegis of Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disability (DEPwD), Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), in association with district administration Jammu as per new approved Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the Ministry.

Prominent among others present were Additional District Development Commissioner; Jammu, District Social Welfare Officer, Jammu, representatives from Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, officials from ALIMCO and Social Welfare.

## NC to contest...

Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Jammu and Kashmir next week. "The prime minister is coming, it is a good thing. He is going to announce some projects".

On the Supreme Court ruling on electoral bonds, Abdullah while welcoming the verdict said people have a right to know where the money for political parties is coming from.

"May the Almighty make this happen that the government accepts this (verdict) and the political parties follow this direction to declare how much money they got and from where they got it.

"People should know where the money power is coming from. It is necessary. I hope it happens before the general election," Abdullah added.

Abdullah, who has been summoned by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with alleged scam in Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association, echoed similar views of the opposition parties that the federal probe agency was being used to target their leaders.

"I am myself under the ED scanner. I will appear before them, I am not scared of the ED or anyone else. Let them do what they want. If they think they can finish off the National Conference by jailing Farooq Abdullah, it will not happen because

the National Conference is a movement," he said.

On the farmers' protest, the Lok Sabha member from Srinagar hoped that better sense prevails over the Centre and a resolution is found to the issue.

"When the farm bills were brought in, the Opposition made noise that a select committee should be formed and the lacunae in these bills be addressed. But they brought the bills on the back of a brute majority. What was the result? Nearly 750 farmers were martyred. When the UP elections were around the corner, they took back all three bills.

"Now, general elections are round the corner and today the farmers are again protesting. I pray that better sense prevails on them (Centre) and no innocent farmer gets killed," he said.

On the chaotic situation in Pakistan and whether it can affect India, Abdullah said a "stable Pakistan is needed for stable India. Unstable Pakistan is not good for us".

None of the three major parties, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, the Pakistan People's Party, or the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf have won the necessary seats in the February 8 general elections to secure a majority in the National Assembly and, therefore, will be unable to form a government on their own.

Abdullah condemned the killing of labourers from Punjab by terrorists here last week. "It is unfortunate that innocent people who have nothing to do with politics are being killed. But the one who killed them knew what would happen to their families. Does any religion allow killing innocents? Religion does not permit killing even the guilty. That is the job of the law. So, I condemn it," he said.

## Omar clarifies: NC...

polls in the Union Territory on its own.

"We were a part of the INDIA alliance and we still are. Things have been taken out of context. The main idea of the grouping is to defeat the BJP because there is no point in sailing in two boats," Omar Abdullah said with his father, also the party's Srinagar MP, by his side.

Farooq Abdullah, he said, was echoing the general sentiments of party workers. "NC workers want to fight elections on all six seats but the truth is that sometimes for a bigger objective, small sacrifices have to be made.

"If the bigger objective is to win seats back from the BJP, it is necessary for the National Conference to enter into a seat sharing understanding with the Congress. Our doors are open," the party's vice president said.

Informal talks with the Congress are already on and there is scope for further discussions, he said.

"...I would like to make it very clear that our commitment to the INDIA grouping remains even though the founding members of the alliance have unfortunately left over the past few weeks. We are not among those who will leave. We will continue our discussions with the Congress and hope to arrive at some agreement soon," he said.

The six Lok Sabha seats in Jammu and Kashmir; and Ladakh are Baramulla, Srinagar, Anantnag, Jammu, Udhampur and Ladakh. Of these, the three seats in the Valley -- Baramulla, Srinagar, Anantnag -- are with the NC. The other three are with the BJP.

"...Once we make friends, we stick to that...I would like to make it categorically clear that no door, no window and not even a crack is open for NDA," Omar Abdullah said, dismissing reports that Farooq Abdullah was hinting that the NC was not averse to joining the NDA as "mischievous and concocted".

He said his party's job was also to get the maximum number of seats in the assembly elections, as and when they are held, so the process of "undoing the damage done to Jammu and Kashmir by the BJP" can be begin.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the union territory next week, Omar Abdullah said, "We will also get to know how much development has happened in Jammu and Kashmir."

One thing that the people would like to hear from the prime minister is whether his party will honour the Supreme Court's decision to hold assembly elections before September this year, he said.

"Also, the prime minister, who is the biggest supporter of one nation, one election, should begin the process by holding simultaneous elections in Jammu and Kashmir," Omar Abdullah said.

## 4 hotels, banquet...

the approval of the competent authority, the District Magistrate invoked relevant sections of Water Prevention and Control of Pollution Act, Air Prevention and Control of Pollution Act, and Environment Protection Act against five hotels and a banquet hall functioning within the jurisdiction of Udhampur district.

A team of officials enforced the closure of the identified establishments, the spokesperson said.

## Azad for unity...

progress and development of the region.

Azad greeted the Pahari community for getting the ST status and emphasized that this quota to Gujar Community should remain intact and not be tampered with, as it is vital for the empowerment and socio-economic upliftment of the Gujar community.

He cautioned against divisive tactics employed by other political parties and called for a steadfast focus on addressing public issues.

He criticized the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) for their opportunistic alliances and power-hungry politics.

Azad pointed out the instances where NC and PDP collaborated with the BJP to gain power.

He highlighted that while he was not made a Member of Parliament or a Minister by the BJP, leaders like Omar Abdullah held ministerial positions in previous BJP-led governments.

Azad accused both NC and PDP of prioritizing power over the interests of the people. He warned of potential future alliances between NC and BJP, citing their power-hungry motives. He reiterated his commitment to fostering development, peace, and prosperity. He also highlighted the importance of bringing back schemes like the Roshni Scheme to address issues of land ownership and to combat corruption effectively. Azad pledged to work tirelessly to eradicate corruption and promote transparency in governance. He affirmed that his focus remains on improving the socio-economic landscape of the region and creating opportunities for all.

Among others present in the meeting were Vice Chairman GM Saroori, General secretary RS Chib, General Secretary Anita Thakur, Chief Spokesperson, Spokesperson Ch Imran Zafar, State Secretary Riyaz Naz, Adv Masood Choudhary WC Member, Salman Nizami, State Secretary Sunita Arora, Zonal President Zahid Malik, Ishfaq Mirza and others.

## Former NC minister...

and submitted his resignation from the basic membership of the party after walking out of the meeting.



BJP President, Ravinder Raina and others welcoming Mushtaq Ahmad Shah Bukhari into partyfold.

BJP will further strengthen the party at the grassroots level." He claimed a wave in Jammu and Kashmir in favour of the BJP and the prime minister who had provided justice to all sections of society who were deprived of their rights for the past 70 years. "In the coming days, you will see more political stalwarts joining BJP and there will be only one party left in Jammu and Kashmir," he said, adding that the lotus -- the BJP's poll symbol -- will bloom not only in Dal Lake but in the entire landscape in Kashmir: Lok Sabha elections are due in April-May.

## Forest fire triggers...

station limits around 5.30 pm on Wednesday, triggering a few landmine explosions. There was no report of any casualty in the blasts, the officials said, adding that the blaze was brought under control after several hours of firefighting operation by the Army.

## BSF lodges protest...

in Suchetgarh this afternoon, the officials said.

On Wednesday evening, Pakistan Rangers violated ceasefire by firing on a BSF post at Makval in the R S Pura Sector; prompting retaliation from the Indian side.

The cross-border firing continued for 25 minutes but there was no casualty or damage on the Indian side.

The officials said the meeting ended in a cordial atmosphere with both sides agreeing to maintain peace and tranquility on the International Border.

## Rs 250-crore money laundering case HC grants bail to former J&K Co-operative Bank chairman

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court granted bail to Mohammad Shafi Dar, former J&K Cooperative Bank Chairman who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in Rs 250 Crore money laundering case.

Justice Rahul Bharti, while granting bail to accused, observed that examining the things from this angle, the petitioner can be said to have a prima facie case in his favor just for the sake of earning bail which by no stretch of reasoning and reference is going to earn him any reprieve from facing trial in a criminal case if the ED is able to find out legal basis for his complicity and culpability in money laundering along with other accused persons whomsoever in the case.

The petitioner has ceased to be the chairman of J&K State Cooperative Bank since 2020 and as such that denudes him from any position to influence any aspect relatable to the case. In addition, the sickness of the petitioner is also a ground persuading this court to grant him bail. The court of Special Judge Anti-Corruption (CBI cases) Srinagar, brushed aside the aspect of matter with respect to reported sickness of the petitioner saying that the heart related medical condition of the petitioner can be investigated even when the petitioner is suffering arrest custody.

There is no denying the fact that the petitioner is 63 years old person and at this stage of life any health deteriorating condition if neglected that too in a state of custody can cause complications and in the present case. There is a medical reference on record to prima facie establish that the petitioner is having heard related complication which the petitioner in exercise of his fundamental right to personal liberty is well within his right to get it treated to the best of his resources and discretion and in that regard the public exchequer can be absolved from bearing the burden of medically attending the petitioner in custody.

With these observations, Court said that a case is made out for grant of bail by allowing the bail plea of the petitioner. The petition is thus allowed.

The petitioner is hereby granted bail subject to the terms and conditions of furnishing personal bond to the tune of rupees ten lacs to the satisfaction of the Superintendent of Jail concerned and surety bond of two sureties of like amount to the satisfaction of Registrar Judicial, Srinagar of this court. The petitioner shall not leave the territorial jurisdiction of Special Judge Anti-Corruption (CBI cases) Srinagar without due permission from the said court by making an application to the said effect by show of reasons. The petitioner shall not in any manner influence or intermeddle with the investigation/trial of the case as may come to be set up by the ED against him. The petitioner shall be bound to present himself in person as and when called and summoned by the ED or the Special Court /Authority in connection with the case in reference.

## 3 vehicles including 2 dumpers seized for illegal mining

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SAMBA: Police on Thursday seized three vehicles including two dumpers in the jurisdiction of Police Station Samba & Police Station Ramgarh which were being used for illegal transportation/mining of the construction material.

A Police party of Police Post Mansar headed by Incharge Police Post Mansar while performing vehicle checking duty at naka Mansar has seized two Dumpers bearing regd. No. JK19A-7210& No. JK21G-0036 for illegal mining/transportation in the area. A Police party of Border Police Post Koulpur headed by Incharge Border Police Post Koulpur has intercepted a tractor trolley without regd. No. for checking at naka Koulpur. During checking, the driver of the said vehicle failed to produce valid document and was found illegally transporting construction material from Devak river bed.

## Bovine smuggler arrested, 2 bovines rescues, car seized

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SAMBA: Samba on Thursday arrested a bovine smuggler who had been evading arrest in a case registered against him in Police Station Samba and also rescued two bovines in a bovine smuggling bid in the jurisdiction of Police Station Ghagwal in which a Wagon R car used for bovine transportation was seized.

The bovine smuggler identified as Tanver Ahmed, son of Nazir Ahmed Doyee, resident of Kadder Anantnag has been arrested in case FIR No. 44/2024 u/s 188 IPC, 11 PCA Act registered at Police Station Samba. Further investigation is underway.

A Police team of Police Station Ghagwal while performing vehicle checking duty at naka NHW Tapyal, signalled to stop a Wagon R car bearing regd. No. JK02BB-5655 coming from Kathua side for checking. But the driver of vehicle accelerated the speed endangering the life of police personnel on naka duty. The alert cops successfully intercepted the vehicle near naka point and during checking of the car, two bovines were found inside the vehicle which were tied in a cruel manner and were being transported illegally without any valid permission. However, driver of the vehicle managed to escape from the spot taking advantage of the darkness.

A case FIR No. 19/2023 U/S 188, 336 IPC, 11 PCA Act, 50, 52, 54 Transport of Animal Rules has been registered at Police Station Ghagwal. Further investigation is underway.

## Missing girl reunited with family

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

REASI: Police on Thursday reunited a girl with her family. As per details, On 3rd of February a man resident of Seela teshil and District Reasi reported at Police Station Reasi that his daughter is missing from home. On this missing report was registered at Police Station Reasi vid3e DDR No. 17 Dated 03.02.2024 and search was launched. Enquiries from the family, relatives & friends gave sufficient clues of the missing girl & accordingly Sources of police were activated. After meticulous track-following, with the help of technical assistance, consistent hectic efforts, team of Police Station Reasi zeroed upon the location of the girl. Police team raided at different locations and recovered the missing girl. After completing all the legal formalities the missing women reunited with her family. Further Enquiry into the matter of missing is going on while the girl has been re-United with family.

## Police conducts Thana Diwas in several districts

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KISHTWAR: District Kishtwar Police conducted Thana Diwas at Police Station Kishtwar, Dachhan, Marwah, of District Kishtwar. The 'Thana Diwas' programme was organized under the supervision of SSP Kishtwar by the SDPOs and SHOs at the Police stations in the district.

The Thana Diwas were attended by various members of civil society, shopkeeper associations and respectable of concerned areas. During the meeting, many issues raised by the participants. Officers gave the patient hearing to the grievances of public and assured that police related issues will met on priority and issues related to civil administration will be taken up with civil administration for early redressal with feedback reports. SSP Kishtwar Abdul Qayoom in his message welcomed and appealed the participants to co-operate with Police and administration in maintaining law & order in the area and in identifying anti-national & anti-social elements. Participants were also apprised about the trending cybercrime and modus operandi of cyber criminals.

REASI: As a part of public outreach programme, Thana Diwas, an initiative of Government of J&K UT to bridge the gap between Police and Public and also to listen and redress the grievances of common masses organised at Police Station Reasi, Kouri, Panchayat Dadoora, Ransoo Town and at Tuli Banna by District Police Reasi. The programme was chaired by Neeraj Padyar, Dy.SP Hqrs. Reasi along with SHO Police Station Reasi Insp. Ranjeet Singh Rao at Police Station Reasi, SDPO Arnas Irfan Khan, alongwith SHO Police Station Arnas Insp. Jeet Singh at Kouri, SDPO Katra Surinder Singh Baloria alongwith SHO Police Station Katra Insp. Nishant Gupta at Panchayat Dadoora, SHO Police Station Ransoo Insp. Rakesh Kumar at Ransoo Town and SI Rajinder Singh of Police Station Chassana at Tuli Banna. During the Programme, participants highlighted various issues of public importance, and they were assured that their genuine grievances pertaining to Police will be resolved on priority and that of Civil Administration will be taken up with the concerned departments for their early redressal.

KATUA: District Police Kathua also organized Thana Diwas in the jurisdictional area of PP Basantpur which was chaired by Addl. SP Kathua accompanied by DySP DAR Kathua alongwith SHO Lakanpur and IC PP Basantpur etc. The meeting was attended by the Sarpanches, Panches (PRI's) etc of respective areas as well as other respectable citizens/civil societies of Lakanpur area were also participated. More than 70/80 people participated in the meeting.

In the public outreach Programme numerous grievances projected by the general public of Lakanpur area like Drugs Abuse, Tenets Verifications, Traffic Regulations i.e Traffic Challan, Installation of CCTV Cameras, alongwith other issues in the area which were resolved on the spot as the chairing officer gave patient hearing to the participants and also assured that issues pertaining to other departments will be taken up accordingly with the concerned authorities. The Main objective of the "Thana Diwas" was to discuss/acquaint with the problems of the general Public of the Lakanpur Basantpur area and to develop a sense among the general public that Kathua Police is very much concerned to redress the genuine issues of the public.